511 hundred years as factory-made goods destroyed village handicrafts, usury and tenancy increased, wars and ineffectual governments brought disruption and oppression, and overpopulation became steadily worse. "The most bankrupt countryside in Asia is the Chinese. The worst crisis of overpopulation China has yet had to face has been accompanied by a breakdown of traditional ideas and traditional authority so complete as to lead to a state of near anarchy."[2]

182 178 621 The characteristic way of life of the peasants has been slowly disintergrating under manifold pressures. During prosperous periods in the past a delicate balance of human and economic factors fostered a crowded, conformist, but on the whole harmonious village life. Recent decades have seen the old harmony replaced by tension and a predatory struggle for survival. And, despite the isolation of most villages, ideas and ideals from the West have slowly undermined the authority of the older mores and customary laws.

Despite all the fissures that have developed, it is well to remember that peasant life everywhere has a tremendous inertia, that it is incredibly resistant to all the forces of change. Thus much of the sweeping change that occurred in city life under comparable pressures did not occur in the peasant villages.

000 The main economic and social unit of the village is the family, and a special study is de-

2. Maurice Zinkin, Asia and the West, London, 1951, p.111.